

CHECKLIST ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

Project Name:	InterBel Utility Line Easement, Olney Townsite
Proposed Implementation Date:	January 2021
Proponent:	InterBel Telephone Cooperative, Inc.
Location:	Section 7, T32N, R23W (Stillwater Unit)
County:	Flathead

I. TYPE AND PURPOSE OF ACTION

InterBel Telephone Cooperative, Inc. (InterBel) is proposing to install new underground fiberoptic telecommunications facilities that would provide services to the townsite of Olney, MT. InterBel is locating facilities along existing public and state roadways. There are two state residential lease access roads (1st Avenue North and Pothole Drive) where InterBel would need a utility Easement from DNRC to install fiberoptic within the road Right of Way. The estimated encumbered acreage is 1.208 acres.

The lands involved in this proposed project are held by the State of Montana in trust for Montana State University 2nd Grant and Public Buildings trusts per the Enabling Act of February 22, 1889; 1972 Montana Constitution, Article X, Section 11. The Board of Land Commissioners and DNRC are required by law to administer these trust lands to produce the largest measure of reasonable and legitimate return over the long run for the beneficiary institutions (Section 77-1-202, MCA).

II. PROJECT DEVELOPMENT

1. PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT, AGENCIES, GROUPS OR INDIVIDUALS CONTACTED:

Provide a brief chronology of the scoping and ongoing involvement for this project. List number of individuals contacted, number of responses received, and newspapers in which notices were placed and for how long. Briefly summarize issues received from the public.

No formal scoping was initiated; however, the 16 cabin site lease holders in Olney who would be impacted by the utility easement were notified by letter dated June 3, 2021. This letter described where the utilities would be located in relation to their leases while asking the lessee to sign a *Notice of Settlement of Damages* form and return to the Department before an easement could be granted to InterBel. All 16 *Notice of Settlement of Damages* forms have been signed and returned indicating that no damages to their improvements are anticipated.

2. OTHER GOVERNMENTAL AGENCIES WITH JURISDICTION, LIST OF PERMITS NEEDED:

Examples: cost-share agreement with U.S. Forest Service, 124 Permit, 3A Authorization, Air Quality Major Open Burning Permit.

None

3. ALTERNATIVE DEVELOPMENT:

Describe alternatives considered and, if applicable, provide brief description of how the alternatives were developed. List alternatives that were considered but eliminated from further analysis and why.

No-Action Alternative A

No-Action Alternative would deny this easement application.

Action Alternative B

Action Alternative would recommend Land Board approval of this easement to InterBel.

III. IMPACTS ON THE PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

- *RESOURCES* potentially impacted are listed on the form, followed by common issues that would be considered.
- Explain **POTENTIAL IMPACTS AND MITIGATIONS** following each resource heading.
- Enter "NONE" If no impacts are identified or the resource is not present.

4. GEOLOGY AND SOIL QUALITY, STABILITY AND MOISTURE:

Consider the presence of fragile, compactable or unstable soils. Identify unusual geologic features. Specify any special reclamation considerations. Identify direct, indirect, and cumulative effects to soils.

No measurable impacts would be anticipated.

5. WATER QUALITY, QUANTITY AND DISTRIBUTION:

Identify important surface or groundwater resources. Consider the potential for violation of ambient water quality standards, drinking water maximum contaminant levels, or degradation of water quality. Identify direct, indirect, and cumulative effects to water resources.

No measurable impacts would be anticipated.

6. AIR QUALITY:

What pollutants or particulate would be produced (i.e. particulate matter from road use or harvesting, slash pile burning, prescribed burning, etc)? Identify the Airshed and Impact Zone (if any) according to the Montana/Idaho Airshed Group. Identify direct, indirect, and cumulative effects to air quality.

No measurable impacts would be anticipated.

7. VEGETATION COVER, QUANTITY AND QUALITY:

What changes would the action cause to vegetative communities? Consider rare plants or cover types that would be affected. Identify direct, indirect, and cumulative effects to vegetation.

A minor amount of vegetation may be slightly disturbed from equipment during installation. No measurable impact would be anticipated; however, any disturbed areas would need to be grass seeded immediately following installation.

8. TERRESTRIAL, AVIAN AND AQUATIC LIFE AND HABITATS:

Consider substantial habitat values and use of the area by wildlife, birds or fish. Identify direct, indirect, and cumulative effects to fish and wildlife.

No measurable impacts would be anticipated.

9. UNIQUE, ENDANGERED, FRAGILE OR LIMITED ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES:

Consider any federally listed threatened or endangered species or habitat identified in the project area. Determine effects to wetlands. Consider Sensitive Species or Species of special concern. Identify direct, indirect, and cumulative effects to these species and their habitat.

No measurable impacts would be anticipated.

10. HISTORICAL AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES:

Identify and determine direct, indirect, and cumulative effects to historical, archaeological or paleontological resources.

Should any historical or archeological sites be discovered, during the course of these activities, all use will cease until a DNRC Archaeologist is consulted.

11. AESTHETICS:

Determine if the project is located on a prominent topographic feature, or may be visible from populated or scenic areas. What level of noise, light or visual change would be produced? Identify direct, indirect, and cumulative effects to aesthetics.

None

12. DEMANDS ON ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES OF LAND, WATER, AIR OR ENERGY:

Determine the amount of limited resources the project would require. Identify other activities nearby that the project would affect. Identify direct, indirect, and cumulative effects to environmental resources.

None

13. OTHER ENVIRONMENTAL DOCUMENTS PERTINENT TO THE AREA:

List other studies, plans or projects on this tract. Determine cumulative impacts likely to occur as a result of current private, state or federal actions in the analysis area, and from future proposed state actions in the analysis area that are under MEPA review (scoped) or permitting review by any state agency.

None

IV. IMPACTS ON THE HUMAN POPULATION
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>RESOURCES potentially impacted are listed on the form, followed by common issues that would be considered.</i>• <i>Explain POTENTIAL IMPACTS AND MITIGATIONS following each resource heading.</i>• <i>Enter "NONE" if no impacts are identified or the resource is not present.</i>

14. HUMAN HEALTH AND SAFETY:

Identify any health and safety risks posed by the project.

None

15. INDUSTRIAL, COMMERCIAL AND AGRICULTURE ACTIVITIES AND PRODUCTION:

Identify how the project would add to or alter these activities.

None

16. QUANTITY AND DISTRIBUTION OF EMPLOYMENT:

Estimate the number of jobs the project would create, move or eliminate. Identify direct, indirect, and cumulative effects to the employment market.

No effects.

17. LOCAL AND STATE TAX BASE AND TAX REVENUES:

Estimate tax revenue the project would create or eliminate. Identify direct, indirect, and cumulative effects to taxes and revenue.

No change from existing conditions would be anticipated.

18. DEMAND FOR GOVERNMENT SERVICES:

Estimate increases in traffic and changes to traffic patterns. What changes would be needed to fire protection, police, schools, etc.? Identify direct, indirect, and cumulative effects of this and other projects on government services

None

19. LOCALLY ADOPTED ENVIRONMENTAL PLANS AND GOALS:

List State, County, City, USFS, BLM, Tribal, and other zoning or management plans, and identify how they would affect this project.

None

20. ACCESS TO AND QUALITY OF RECREATIONAL AND WILDERNESS ACTIVITIES:

Identify any wilderness or recreational areas nearby or access routes through this tract. Determine the effects of the project on recreational potential within the tract. Identify direct, indirect, and cumulative effects to recreational and wilderness activities.

None

21. DENSITY AND DISTRIBUTION OF POPULATION AND HOUSING:

Estimate population changes and additional housing the project would require. Identify direct, indirect, and cumulative effects to population and housing.

No effects.

22. SOCIAL STRUCTURES AND MORES:

Identify potential disruption of native or traditional lifestyles or communities.

No effects.

23. CULTURAL UNIQUENESS AND DIVERSITY:

How would the action affect any unique quality of the area?

No effects.

24. OTHER APPROPRIATE SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC CIRCUMSTANCES:

Estimate the return to the trust. Include appropriate economic analysis. Identify potential future uses for the analysis area other than existing management. Identify direct, indirect, and cumulative economic and social effects likely to occur as a result of the proposed action.

Granting the easement would generate \$585.00 for the State Normal School Trust. Valuation was determined on current market land values per acre.

EA Checklist Prepared By:	Name: Nicole Stickney	Date: 9/22/2021
	Title: Special Uses Program Manager	

V. FINDING

25. ALTERNATIVE SELECTED:

The Action Alternative (Alternative B) – recommending Land Board approval of the easement application.

26. SIGNIFICANCE OF POTENTIAL IMPACTS:

I find that Action Alternative B would not have measurable or significant impacts on the environment. Taken individually and cumulatively, the proposed activities are common practices.

27. NEED FOR FURTHER ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS:

☐ EIS ☐ More Detailed EA ☒ No Further Analysis

EA Checklist Approved By:	Name: Dave Ring
	Title: Stillwater Unit Manager
Signature: /s/ Dave Ring	Date: September 30, 2021